

Holden AgComm News

Our Mission Statement: To serve, promote, and enhance agriculture within the Town of Holden; To be a liaison between town officials and residents; To provide a resource to assist local farmers and help preserve the town's open space.



What we are plowing toward:

Working with the Select Board to create an Open Space Preservation Fund.

Creating a priority list of Chap 61 properties

Our Meetings

Are open to the public and are held once a month on the 3rd Tuesday at 7:00 pm in the Selectman's Room of the Starbard Building

Next Meeting is scheduled for Feb 16th.

Land Preservation Fund Initiative

As mentioned in our last newsletter, the Ag Comm is working with the Board of Selectmen to establish an Open Space Preservation Fund. Since that time (Aug 2015) we have made a formal request to the BOS that such a fund be included in the next (FY17) budget. The BOS concurred and included this exciting new concept in their goals presented to the Town Manager last fall. We expect to see this fund included in the new budget to be released in Feb. It will then be reviewed by the Finance Committer and hopefully presented formally at the May Town Meeting. We need your support for this initiative. If you have ideas about how such a fund should be put together or used, let us know. Write or call your favorite BOS members for their continued support! Next May, we will need help again to vote for the actual funding when it comes up at Town Meeting.

Chapter 61 Lands – Update

The Chapter 61 lands conversion review process spearheaded by the Ag Comm continues to work very well. As mentioned in the last newsletter, a property on Reservoir St. was proposed for conversion from Chapter 61B (Forest Land) to residential. Once again, the Ag Comm led a careful review of the proposal. Neither the Town nor any non-profit land conservation agency found continuing need for the property. Therefore, at the BOS Public Hearing on Oct 5, the property was released to the developer.



Winter Farmer's Market

For the first time ever, there will be a winter Farmers Market in Holden! It's held just once a month (3rd Friday) from 3:30 to 7:00 PM. Jed's Hardware has been gracious enough to be the host facility. Try it out! Buy local products from local farms and gardens. Help it expand next year! Check out the list of sellers on Jed's Facebook page :

<https://www.facebook.com/jedshardware>

Lilac Hedge Farm Returns to Holden

Things have come full circle for the Lilac Hedge Farm brand. The farm was in honor of the former Lilac Hedge Dairy belonging to Donald MacKay which was located in Holden for four generations. Now Lilac Hedge Farm is back in Holden on Bond Road, a place to put down roots and grow for generations. Ryan Mackay and Tom Corbett have moved their sustainably raised beef and sheep operation to their newly purchased facility where they hope to continue providing for the needs of their loyal customers. Meet Ryan and Tom at their location in the Boston Public Market or at <http://www.lilachedgefarm.com>



Community Garden Update

The Holden Community Garden is going strong! Progress late last year was slowed by the discovery of vast infestations of poison ivy on the Creamer property where the garden was originally sited. The group persevered however and has

We Have A Facebook Page!

Like us on Facebook! We are very excited about our new Facebook page. People can follow all the agricultural news, events and happenings within Holden on our page: <https://www.facebook.com/HoldenAgComm> We will still send out our periodic newsletter that has gotten rave reviews from our recipients. You can also view the latest edition on the town's website.

Support Local Agriculture

Looking for other ways to support local agriculture and farmers. How about:

Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation

The Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) is a non-profit association which promotes and represents the interests of farmers in the Commonwealth. It is a federation, or union of smaller organizations, which consists of 11 county Farm Bureaus representing a total of over 6500 member families. MFBF, along with state Farm Bureaus from the 49 other states and Puerto Rico, is a member of the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF). The county, state and national organizations are all linked and work closely together, but they remain independent organizations. MFBF has a great record of initiating and changing laws and policies which support farmers. Members and supporters are entitled to lots of discounts on common purchases like insurance and tools. See more at: <http://mfbf.net>

Central Mass Grown

Central Mass Grown is a young organization whose goals are:

To educate farmers, consumers, and the general public on issues about and related to farming;

To support the advancement of knowledge and understanding of farms and farming and their benefits and relationship to the environmental, economic, nutritional and social well-being of persons within central Massachusetts and surrounding areas;

To promote the sales and purchase of agricultural products grown in Central Massachusetts to local markets, restaurants, retailers, aggregators, distributors, general consumers and others.

See more at: <http://centralmassgrown.org>

Looking for something Different?

Worcester's Best Chef Completion, an annual event has a new partner this year and a new focus. Central Mass Grown has worked with the competition organizers to a local food flavor added to the event this year. This great event will be held at Mechanics Hall on Sun Jan 31st. More details are at: <http://www.worcestersbestchef.com/>

New recruits

With all of the above mentioned activities, plus more to come, we are in need of a few good members and alternates. Time invested to our group is entirely up to the individual. We have multiple upcoming goals to accomplish by bringing more agriculture to Holden and would greatly appreciate a few more hands out in the "fields".

Upcoming Events of Interest

The annual Worcester County Conservation District seedling sale will be open in early Feb. This is a great place to buy tree seedlings, fruit trees, groundcovers and many other ornamental and edible plants. The prices are hard to beat and the proceeds support conservation activities throughout Worcester County. Find out more at:

<http://www.worcesterconservation.org/seedling-sale-15.html>

The Mass Association of Agricultural Commissions (MAAC) Annual Meeting will be held Saturday, February 27, 2016, Holiday Inn, Marlboro (next to Mass Farm Bureau headquarters). More at: <http://www.massagcom.org/>



We hope you've enjoyed this latest version of our newsletter. If there is a topic you wish for us to cover please let us know. Also, if you know someone whom you think may also enjoy this periodical, please forward us their information. Thank you, The Hold AgCom. To contact the Holden AgCom you may email us at holden.agcom@gmail.com or you can reach our Chair Person Denise Cummings at northwoodsfarm@live.com.